

**New Haven, Hartford, Springfield Commuter Rail Study**  
**Fourth Steering Committee Meeting**

June 30, 2004 – 1:00 P.M.

Connecticut Department of Transportation, Newington, CT

The fourth steering committee meeting began with an introduction by Len Lapsis of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT). He thanked everyone for coming. Kari Watkins of Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) then presented the alternatives technical memo, and informed the committee of where the study currently stands. She reviewed the minimum and maximum build alternatives and told the committee that this meeting was designed to get their input as to what alternatives would be most suitable. The Alternatives report and Steering Committee presentation are available at the project website [www.nhhsrail.com](http://www.nhhsrail.com) or in hard copy if requested. The meeting was then opened to questions and feedback.

The first question was asked about double track and how this project will fit with the New Britain Hartford busway in Newington. Tom Maziarz of the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) responded that discussions have taken place between Amtrak and DOT and they have agreed that the distance between bus and rail is sufficient. Harry Harris (ConnDOT) noted that there is room for bus and double track at Newington Station, but not at Union Station as presently configured.

A question was also raised about freight service on the rail line and how it will be impacted by commuter service. Bob Glover (WSA) responded that freight service may be moved outside peak hours to fit the schedules shown in the report, but only if it does not adversely impact their operations. It was noted that the freight operator has been contacted to discuss their operations.

The next issue raised was whether a Bradley Airport bus service was included with the four alternatives if a rail connector is not built. Ms. Watkins responded that the service is included, and will mimic parking shuttles currently in place at the airport.

The next issue raised by a member of the public was the replacement of the existing bridge over the Connecticut River. Mr. Lapsis indicated that the bridge currently has weight restrictions to freight service only. Amtrak and DOT would be looking to freight operators to partner on construction costs for a new or repaired bridge.

A member of the committee asked if Amtrak is interested in working with the State on at-grade crossing improvements, high-level platforms, and crossovers. Ms. Watkins responded that Amtrak is very interested in this study, and a representative was hoping to attend the meeting. Amtrak has not yet given their opinion on specific options and their interest may depend on the operator of the service.

A question was raised as to if Springfield was interested in increasing accessibility to Bradley International Airport. Katie Stebbins of the city of Springfield indicated that the city is definitely interested in better connectivity to the airport and in rail service in the

corridor. Timothy Brennen from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission indicated that the region is very interested in rail service in the area and interested in extending further north. The State of Massachusetts sees this as a great opportunity, further linking Springfield to Hartford and New Haven for economic development. A follow-up question was asked as to whether there was any interest in linking Springfield to Boston. Mr. Brennen indicated that there is generally more of a north-south pull in the region, with Springfield having more economic ties to Hartford than Boston.

Mr. Maziarz commented that projected ridership seems on the low side, recognizing the uniqueness of the model. He suggested that we may want to bracket ridership numbers, giving more of a range. Ms. Watkins stated that the ridership numbers are conservative assumptions, and the factors used were averages for smaller rail systems. Using a range of factors could provide a range of results. Another committee member followed up by asking whether ridership adjustments have been made to reflect the recent increase in gas prices. Ms. Watkins responded that no adjustments have been made, but it may be justification for being less conservative with ridership numbers.

Two questions were raised about Amtrak, the first being whether Amtrak and commuter rail services would be seamless. The second was if Amtrak is receptive to the schedule changes in the second bi-state alternative. Ms. Watkins responded that a seamless service would be more attractive to riders. Definitely the cost for using the line, be it Amtrak or commuter service should be seamless. As far as Amtrak's opinion, the schedules are theoretical for now and Amtrak will likely wait to see the final outcome of this study to look into the possibility of moving their schedules. Amtrak's trains are timed for inter-city services and connections in New Haven. Amtrak has to also coordinate with other commuter services further south that use its lines.

A member of the committee indicated that the bi-state alternative capital costs are not that high, so we should not be hesitant to recommend the more robust service. In response, Ms. Watkins indicated that according to ConnDOT average cost data, it costs \$2 million to add a lane to one mile of freeway. Therefore, it would cost approximately \$240 million to add a lane in both directions to I-91 between New Haven and Springfield.

Another member of the committee asked if the Connecticut and Massachusetts congressional delegations can add support in terms of authorization funding. The committee was informed that the Connecticut delegation is aware of this project, but should be kept better informed on the status of this study.

The committee was then asked to give additional feedback on the alternatives and additional menu items they wish to see in the implementation plan.

Judy Gott of the South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) indicated that Alternative CT1 does not benefit New Haven. The region prefers the bi-state alternatives, but at the very least CT2. However, there must be a station in North Haven for them to support the project.

Fred Riese of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) noted that there should be a later (8:00 A.M.) train out of New Haven to complete the schedule.

The City of Springfield representatives advocated the bi-state alternatives, also noting that Massachusetts already has the double track necessary for service.

Tom Maziarz (CRCOG) also gave support for the bi-state alternative.

The Peter Pan Bus Lines representative voiced his concern about rail service, noting that Peter Pan service is not in the commuter model and it is unknown how this would impact their business.

The delegation from Enfield emphasized the importance of a station there and mentioned that it could also be a useful link to Bradley Airport.

Judy Gott (SCRCOG) commented that the service should not be “under-invested”. It would become a serious public relations issue if people are not satisfied with service that has been implemented.

Karyn Gilvarg from the City of New Haven stated that the city supports the bi-state alternatives. The positive impacts of commuter rail should be a part of the State Plan of Conservation and Development due to the economic benefit the service could have.

The meeting concluded with ConnDOT stating that they will be going to the Transportation Strategy Board (TSB) to present the alternatives and give the committee’s opinion. Comments should be directed to Ms. Watkins by the end of the month of July and she will email out the date of the TSB meeting (anticipated on August 24) to the committee.

Attendance at the meeting included the following committee members and alternates, study team members and other interested parties:

Barbara Breslin	Federal Highway Administration
Larry MacMillan	US EPA
Fred Riese	Department of Environmental Protection
Tim Doherty	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Tim Brennan	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Tom Maziarz	Capitol Region Council of Governments
Ken Shooshan-Stoller	Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Carl Stephani	Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Judy E. Gott	South Central Regional Council of Governments
Karyn M. Gilvarg	City of New Haven
Peggy Brennan	City of Meriden
Peter Souza	Town of Windsor
Peter Bryanton	Town of Enfield
Scott Shanley	Town of Enfield

Bill Lee	Enfield Revitalization
Katie Stebbins	City of Springfield
Bob O'Brien	City of Springfield
Dennis Pope	I-91 TIA
Russell St. John	CPTC / P&W
Michael Sharff	Peter Pan Bus Lines
Cynthia R. Lemek	All Aboard
Robert Levy	Rideworks
Len Lapsis	Connecticut Department of Transportation
Peter Richter	Connecticut Department of Transportation
Carmine Trotta	Connecticut Department of Transportation
Dave Balzer	Connecticut Department of Transportation
Harry Harris	Connecticut Department of Transportation
Ned Hurle	Connecticut Department of Transportation
Bob Glover	Wilbur Smith Associates
Karl Smith	Wilbur Smith Associates
Tim Sorenson	Wilbur Smith Associates
Kari Watkins	Wilbur Smith Associates
Marianne Latimer	Fitzgerald & Halliday
Katie Zito	Senate Democrats
David McCluskey	State Representative
James Abrams	State Representative
Fiath McMahon	State Representative
Bradley Craig	LTK Engineering
Michael Glasson	